CONFESSION OF GUILT AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN GEORGE ORWELL'S 'SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT'

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ABSTRACT

George Orwell whose asal Eric Arthur Blaire was a novelist, essayist and critic who addressed the hottest issues of his time including imperialism, fascism and communism. Present story Shooting an Elephant is also one of his masterpieces like Animal Form, Hanging and the Burmese Days. In the present essay he's talked about the imperialism, the same sort of tyranny that existed in world history over last four or five centuries. Though there have been coming the certain changes but the ultimate goals have been the same that were to reap the advantages of the colonized and to exploit the natives as well. The present essay has double fold importance as apart being an essay it's a biographical piece of writing too. Where there he has been serving for five years in British imperial force. In this paper, the researcher will prove the conflicting feelings of the writer, his confession and the role of cultural differences that lead him to undertake such a heavy decision to crush a valued piece of property (an elephant).

Key words: Imperialism, Elephant, Colonized, Colonizer, Confession, Decision

INTRODUCTION

Texts can never be made as simple as sometimes they are taken. A writer uses layers of meanings, he tries to talk in such a hidden way that sometimes it becomes a very hard task for a lazy reader to get to those meanings. As the phrase itself goes lie the said that are unsaid and unsaid that are said. That's one of the main traits of the great authors who always try to employee such a literary strategies so that the book house must be in possession of good books. These sorts of the writers are well known and George Orwell is also one of them who not only uses such strategies in showing the world his different point of views as well as his dispositions towards the use of the power of the "Big Boss". Moreover, through his writings he has been giving the world a very good idea of the politics of his times. In his present essay "Shooting an Elephant" which can also be taken as his "Biographical Novel" we do have a number of references in which he has given his disposition as well as hatred towards the authorities or the empire. That's why his following essay makes him very popular too, as he has been serving as a police officer not only in this essay but also in that part of world too which was still a British colony at that time. Orwell hated his job and thought imperialism was "an evil act". As it is said that every action comes with a similar reaction therefore he as a representative of imperialism, was also disliked by locals. In the very next section a few quotes (textual references from the text) will be taken and researcher will try to prove the disposition, hatred and Inner conflicts of the author.

Though the text is so simple, straight forward and clear cut yet its textual approach is having manifold layers of meanings with itself, that's why the twist makes a question that whether it's an essay or a short story?

Hypothesis

The in time decision that makes "Orwel" to have such a guilt feeling clearly shows that he committed a blunder and that was not a Wise Decision. Moreover, Cultural differences between both of the nations will also be discussed.

<u>Background of Theory</u>

Edward Said was an Arab-American historian whose work "Orientalism" has now become as it has also been mentioned above, a Biblical worth for the post-colonial readers. In which he is seen exploring the themes of colonialism, racism and imperialism. It is considered one of the most important works of Said that deals with the interactions of the Western and Eastern cultures. A number of suppositions and series of assumptions have been talked about especially about the Arabs that are totally menaced, dishonest and irrational. Being Palestinian himself, he critically deals with those false assumptions related to Arabs and simply points out that "We define the other by what we are not" because these assumptions are taken right and influence not only the boundaries but the ideologies also. Further he says that East is constructed in terms of binary oppositions like civilized/uncivilized, educated/uneducated, developed/undeveloped, irrational/irrational, by the West and this opposition is decisive to the European Self-conception. Finally he talks about the erasure for the created lines of boundaries that are constructed by our false notation and a very sleek and moderate thinking.

Research Questions

This study will answer the following research questions:

- 1. Which sort of behavior/ attitude was the protagonist having?
- 2. What the Circumstances were those led him to take a heavy decision?
- 3. Could cultural differences be taken one of the causes?

Objectives

Following things will be sought out in this research

1. Feelings of guilt will be traced out.

2. Culture differences between the Colonizer and Colonized will be searched.

Limitations and Delimitations of the study

The following study will briefly elaborate

How someone comes across the feelings of guilt?

As George Orwell has written the following Essay which belongs to prose, (Literature Field) where there he (George Orwell) tells us about an incident that he witnessed and enacted himself in a colonized state Burma.

Future Implications

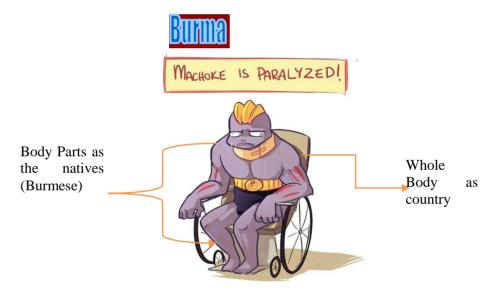
This research will

- Open new dimensions.
- Enlighten the odd feeling.
- Encourage the new researchers to probe insight the topic and explore new ways, paths and streams.

Literature Review

(i)Alam (2006) says that 'imperialism has been the most powerful force in world history over last four and five centuries. Moreover says he that throughout the period imperialists have been changing their grounds as well as their strategies but their goal has been the same which was just to rule and exploit not only the natives but their natural resources too. He also says that both elephant and Orwell clearly get us to the darken side of the picture that comes in the shape of a double edged sword. The central idea of his work is that "stricken, shrunken, immensely old" countries that have been invaded and conquered through a foreigner invader by imperialism, while the Burmese represent its helpless people.

Where there he says that the countries on which control is taken by force and especially the unfortunate masses (natives) both become paralyzed as well as a thing that has nothing to do with. This can easily be understood by the following figure.



In the above given figure whole body is taken as the country while the parts of the body or the organs are taken as the masses (public, natives) it will work alike as the body of a paralyzed person who does nothing except being on the chair and kept on awaiting for someone who will take pity will come near the chair and finally it will be dragged as well as pushed by the dragger or the pusher one. In the same scenario if a nation is being controlled by some other nation it will also get paralyzed and there will also happen the same thing that has been depicted by the figure.

(ii)Sumbul (2014) says that E.A Blaire (George Orwell, a pen name) has always been in the news due to his commissions as a cog in a colonized state Burma. As it is said that coming events cast their shadows before in the same sense Orwell's adventure also comes with the same results he goes there not only in order to save the prestige, to serve them but he himself becomes an instrument in the hands of the evil. And thus also becomes a source that always welcomes the storm that becomes an entity to get the awareness in the masses. 'That were the very final years and Orwell is having anti-capitalist viewpoints. According to him the following piece of writing at the two ground levels, surface level and deeper level. On the surface level it encounters the internal conflicts of the warfare of the officer whether the elephant should be killed or not?

While on the deeper level this incident depicts the use of force over the East by the West. He then comes there, with the point that is, the confession that the writer make by saying

"Imperialism was an evil thing and sooner he Chucked his job and got out of it better".

Finally he concludes is work by quoting the following lines

"I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors the British."

(iii)Ghaforian, Gholi (2015) says that it is said that Edward Said's Orientalism that has been acknowledged a bible for the post colonialist, there he clarifies that binary distinction between the West and the East or the Us and the others.

As it is mentioned that Orwell joined British imperial force having not left with any other option pays his duty very well according to the wills and whims of the British Raj moreover he says that Orwell was in a confused state of mind he was unable to decide that whether he should continued his services or not? He's been serving there for a several years till the last day of his services Orwell has been following this motto "A sahib has got to act like a sahib".

After this he then quotes John Gross with the following quotation a true of British Raj as he was purely connected to Orient (East) as his family including him has been serving there like his father and grandfather.

But over there his bitter experience took him towards the failure. Though he resigned for his services yet his resignation is also not in clear terms. As the following line goes

"I am not able and I don't want completely to abandon the world view that I acquired in the childhood" (Orwell, 1946)

He also says that if we all examined very closely there then one thing gets very clear he was more than half in love with what he was rebelling against.

That can be proved by saying that at one time Orwell says that his job is being made impossible by those brutes according to the psychology it the human nature that when he/she doesn't find his way out then he just tries to console himself by employing a number of pretexts and proves himself very right. So the same case was with Orwell sometimes he gets sympathize towards the natives but most of the time his loyalties turn towards the empire and then natives are called like "evil spirited little beasts" in summarizing up the whole discussion he says that though he's been facing hatred just because of the cruel works of the empire yet he is clearly seen on the British side instead of any other foreign invaders.

Research Methodology

The present research will qualitative in nature. The researcher will provide an analysis on the cultural deviations and the guilt that the protagonist felt just after committing a blunder for this purpose the above stated Research Articles will be focused. Element of cultural imperialism presented in the novel will be discussed in the background of Edward Said's theory of imperialism.

Data Analysis

In this section the short synopsis of the whole will be presented so that each and every aspect should be in proper consideration...

It's a narrative essay in which writer himself is involved. He is working as a police cog (SDPO) for "Big Brother" in colonial Burma. At that time anti European feelings were at the peak. Though the poor colonizers were not having provision to raise a riot but whenever a European lady went through the bazaars, she would probably be spit juice upon her dress.

In the very opening scene Orwell explains that how he is opposed to the British colonized Burma. One thing I notable is also there that Orwell is sometimes seems totally confused with his inner conflicts. Sometimes he seems to be on the side of the Burmese people being deprived by the fundamental rules by the colonizers. Therefore he hates the presence of "British" in the country and sometimes he seems to be with the "British Raaj" in order to save the prestige of "Big Brother/Sahib".

As the colonized people bitterly hate the British Empire and Orwell being the practitioner of those powers is also hatred and faced opposition as well. They don't miss even a single chance to laugh, mock or even to harass him (them--British People).

Soon he (Orwell) is told about the "Must" elephant ravaging the bazaar as soon as he is reported; he takes it as the call of the duty and girds up his loin, on his way he is also told about the havoc being played by that "Monster" but in the mean time he also gets the impression that it's not a wild one, it's actually a tamed elephant who in attack of "must" after breaking chains has got the wrong direction and has suddenly reached at the town.

Burmese being the disarmed ones couldn't do anything except watching the play being played by the White One's therefore destroyed hut of bamboos, a cow along with the dead body of an Indian coolie makes him (Orwell) to send for a rifle not with the intention of killing the beast but for his self defense.

Orwell though has reached, on the spot, but still he thinks that it would be against everything to kill it. When he feels himself before the Burmese, with the expectations to play his role of power and the White men's honour being on the stake makes him ready to overcome their expectations and to not to be humiliated by the Burmese crowd. It won't be wrong to say that he was working like a puppet there. His threads being controlled by the Burmese compelled him to pulled the trigger, he does the same, trigger is pulled and the beast is seen to be stricken, shrunken, immensely old and finally dead.

Just after this, the stage comes when opinions are seem to be divided as old age of cards were with him on the other hand the youth of frolics said that it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. On this the author thanks that the death of the poor coolie gives him a great pretext to make his stance crystal clear that why that elephant was killed???

In this section researcher will attempt to conclude the proposed questions and will closely analyze the text in terms of its structure and contexts fit to "The cultural differences or not"?

By keeping the very proposed questions in the view, before going to explore the proper answer to the questions it would be better to have a detailed discussion about the personality of the writer from the childhood, youth and adulthood

till the day of his writing.

Eric Arthur Blair was born on 25th June, 1903 in India. His father was a colonial servant and this family was a middle class family. His mother moves back to England when Orwell was only a year old while father stayed by 1912. Being a student he was good at studies but due the financial crisis of his family he has to leave his studies and joined British Police in Burma. Due to his opposition and dissatisfaction he resigned in 1927.

He then decides to become a writer, he then starts living with the poor ones, and for a short duration he's been working like a teacher in a private school, and as an assistant at a secondhand bookshop over there he meets his future wife Eileen, married in 1936. A son is adopted in 1944 by the couple. Tragically Eileen dies in the very start of that year. Disposition to such a great loss and his poor health, he continued to his work and finishes his novels. In 1949 in his very last year he gets married with Sonia Brownell, Orwell dies of tuberculosis.

As so far as the behavior of the writer is concerned, as a child Orwell was shy and due to his shyness the lack of confidence was there. According to psychology shyness is

"The tendency to feel awkward, worried or tense during social encounters, especially with unfamiliar people."

Shyness can also be proved like a stumbling block in the progress of a person. A person with shy sort of nature can't easily move, converse or interact with others even

"It can keep them from interacting with others even when they want or need to—leading to problems in relationships and at work."

On the other hand lack of confidence is the main hurdle that stops someone from taking any decision. It's a situation in which someone can't rely himself, due to the absence of the power of taking decisions, one feels himself unable in a fix therefore sometimes just because of the following lacking failures become the fate.

In the light of above said things it won't be wrong to say that Orwell was a very simple sort of person, with the above mentioned lacking he was not good at taking decision especially such a heavy decision that he took and shot a poor elephant. Psychologically, Orwell's deficiency led him to undertook and act according to the situation as he himself says that being in front of the thousands of the crowd, therefore in order to come up the expectations of almost two thousands Burmese, he sent for a rifle, loads it, and presses the trigger more the once and put that "monster" to the death.

Just after this incident Orwell resigned from his job and decided to become a writer. Above narrated incident gets a positive change in the personality of the writer that a shy, less confident boy who hasn't been good at making decisions, has now taken a decision that will turn his life completely. His vision was broaden, his way of thinking was totally changed, he's started to explore and examined the world with a completely new outlook. Just after having made his mind he stood steadfast and kept on facing the hardships. Those were the very tough hours of his life ever as he has to live hand through mouth. He's to spend many years in poverty, sometimes homeless, sometimes doing itinerant work. He's been working as teacher in a private school, as an assistant at second hand bookshop and even as a dishwasher. And finally due to his sheer determination, preservation and a great patience he succeeded to mark his name.

What the circumstances were those lead him to take heavy decision? The role of circumstances can never be minimized. There comes the time when external pressure can affect the ongoing situation. Suppose if someone comes with the idea that he/she will purchase something within the supposed budget but at the right time, after seeing fellow, friends and mates the idea of economized can be turned into the very idea to impress them by your mighty purchase. Therefore it has been proved that situation influences the decisions we make or our already made decisions are influenced by the outer circumstances.

As the story begins with the following line *"I was hated by large numbers of people" (George Orwell, 1936) it can clearly be seen that which type of circumstances were there that compelled the writer to start the story with such a heavy mood. There can a number of factors involved in taking such a heavy decision. Let's discuss them one by one. From the very start, the author has shown a very clear picture of the time that how the foreigners were being treated or teased by the native ones as he says "If a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress." Being the part of the imperial forces, not only the SPDO, Orwell but all the persons belonging to the other nation face hatred and encountered a number of hardships created by the colonized people. According to the proverb "Only wearer knows where the shoe pinches" though they have got the reason against the hatred of the natives but their priorities or the chains don't let them to get rid of the situation as the writer himself says that "I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible". Though Orwell was well aware of the reason and the situation that was going worst and worst day by day yet he was to save the prestige and the honor of the empire that was at stake at that time. According to the "white man's burden" theory and in order to meet its goals still they'll have to be over there and to teach them the norms, the etiquettes and above more to civilize them.

Then here comes the next factor that was the overwhelming crowd. At first as Orwell was told that an elephant has got freed itself and is in the town now, its "mahout" has got to the wrong direction and was too far away at that time, though it's not a wild one yet it has got "must" and has also started to play havoc so an in time action must be taken in this regard as the public and private property plus livestock was destroyed by that "must elephant". Being the in charge of that station Orwell sets out where that elephant was last spotted. There he's told in such a way that the whole story seems to be a false on or a hoaxed thing. All of a sudden he hears an uproar and finds an Indian Coolie lying dead, sprawling in the mud. After having seen the dead one in such a pitiable condition, an official is sent to bring a gun strong enough to be good for such a "monster".

Soon elephant is seen in the nearby fields but in such peaceful manners that Orwell decided not to shoot such valuable working machinery. He was totally against the killing of that elephant as the following line goes "I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary". So the thing gets cleared there that the gun was borrowed for the self-

defense not with the intention to do away with the elephant. But as the writer turns around and comes to know that he's surrounded by the two thousand natives with the expectations that the "beast" will surely be killed by the "sahib" without any delay. As the writer himself says "I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly". Therefore according to the situation he himself replies that "I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind". So in order to come up the expectations, to fulfill the very role of being a "sahib" and to follow the given instructions and directions of the "HQ" he makes his mind to do away with that "bloody monster" because "Once leaders are laughed at, their authority is gone". So for the restoration of the prestige and of the honour of the empire that was at stake at that time and not to be laughed at all he thinks that a white one should not be scared as well as frightened before the "natives" at least. So having not left with any other option, he shoves the cartridges into the magazine, lays down on the ground for a better aim fires at that poor elephant. With every shot the thronged crowed applauses, claps and roars in excitement. Soon unfortunate elephant lays on the ground, and with a few more hits, though Orwell leaves the spot (being a chicken hearted) who is later told that it took around 30 minutes to die. Saying there this won't be wrong that "it was the crowed that pushed him to take such a heavy decision otherwise as he says himself in his autobiographical novel "I had no intention of shooting the elephant". Now it's been proved that the outer circumstances were the main factor that compelled Orwell to do such action that led him to resign from the job at one.

The researcher, here, thinks that there is the dire need of the lens that can clearly project the true picture of the cultural differences between the both states as well as the nations. Lens of cultural criticism will help to understand the tiers of antipathy, opposition hostility and antagonism existing between the British as well as Indian culture. Let's discuss them one by one

When a stronger nation takes control to a weaker one, that's the actual domination that leads to imperialism and cultural differences. The most evident theme in 'Shooting an Elephant' deals with the clash of the culture between both of the nations. The very first and the foremost difference of the culture was, being the Colonizer and the Colonized. Being colonized they (Burmese) were living such a primitive life and due to this the very sense of inferiority is evident there. Moreover, Burmese were not so well educated, civilized and a pre-industrial society. On the other hand colonizers were belonging to a nation that was powerful, strong, industrialized, civilized and with its technological excellences. The following lines can also go like

"The very first moral difference was that the representative belonged to a very powerful nation while natives were from a very poor one on the bases of culture, rites and rituals and were being kept deprived of their fundamental rights". Therefore British are regarded by the native population as cruel oppressors of their freedom as they are considered slave by the empire and are also kept in dirty cells and physically tortured. And just due to this the hatred of natives is evident there as the very first line of the story goes

"I was hated by the large number of people".

According to Said, such consequences usually come with the evil practices done to the natives or the weaker ones. One more examples of the cultural differences is

"The sneering yellow faces of the men that met me everywhere".

So there colour differences are being talked about especially the yellow color, which is in Literature the depiction of the death true to great extent and it's an instable colour associated with cowardice and mental illness. One more scene goes with

"The sympathy that the British feel for the elephant, on the other hand Burmese don't regard the elephant no more than a great tub of meat".

There was the main reason that at that time Orwell was feeling himself helpless one who could do/does nothing but to follow that unnerving crowd, Orwell being alone there feels himself a dummy card being played by that immense crowd by saying

"But in reality, I was only on absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces".

Therefore it could be said that now the cruelty of the culture forces Orwell to undergo such situation and under take such action as he himself says that

". The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong, those two thousand Burmese would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill".

So, in the light of all the above mentioned scenes it won't be wrong to say that there were the cultural differences that won't letting the two nations come closer to one another. That's why the more differences were there, the more feelings of hatred were there. But one thing is crystal clear over there that is Burmese are so poor nation as they are not well educated, civilized and decent ones due to this their ways of living are totally primitive and old whereas Colonizers are a strong nation reaping all the advantages there.

Conclusion

Edward Said (1978) in his most valued work Orientalism has very beautifully explained that Westerners have always misinterpreted the Easterners. Near to them Easterners is strange creature. It won't be wrong to call them "Aliens" by holding the same lens that is actually used by them that's why they can treat according to their wishes and whims. So, same attitude and aptitude is being employed in the present story. For instance the following extract is enough to have a good idea of the imperialism of that time being practiced by the imperial forces

"The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos – all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective."

Orwell, due to having a neutral personality, as he was born in India soon feels boredom and strictly goes against the

tyranny being used by the empire. Though he himself was police there, but soon gets the other side of the picture and then reacts accordingly i.e he says that

"I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better".

The same story is actually a biographical piece of writing in which there are a number of place where there the writer seems confessing his crime (as the writer has tried his utmost best to prove it), his blunders as one reference goes like

"I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors".

Then varied and ever changing circumstances force him (Orwell) to undergo such action though he was not welling to destroy that working machinery as the following line goes

"I had no intention of shooting the elephant".

Lastly, due to cultural differences both of the nations were totally different not only in their ideologies but in their all spheres of life. Due to cultural imperialism Europeans were bitterly hatred by the natives that they don't miss any chance to tease them.

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